

## Joshua 20 - Thursday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Joshua 20:1-9** The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, (2) "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, (3) that the slayer who kills a person accidentally *or* unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. (4) And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. (5) Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. (6) And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.' " (7) So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. (8) And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. (9) These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

- The entirety of Joshua chapter twenty deals with these cities of refuge that we first learned about in our study of the book of Numbers chapter 35.
- Numbers 35 record how God commanded them to do this, and now here in Joshua 20 it records how they actually followed through and did this.
- Having said that, I think I'd be grossly remiss were I not to quickly point out many of the meanings of, and the lessons in, these six cities of refuge.

- In order to do that, I'll borrow heavily from the account we have from back in Numbers 35, and in so doing I'm convinced that you'll be glad I did.
- I say that for a number of reasons not the least of which is woven into the fabric of these chapters, there's a bald man and a picture of the rapture.
- Now that I have your attention, I would like to have you turn to Numbers chapter thirty-five, and follow along as I just read verses six and seven.

**Numbers 35:6-7 NKJV** "Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites *you shall appoint* six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. (7) So all the cities you will give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight; these *you shall give* with their common-land.

- Here we're told that six of the forty-eight cities were to be for refuge to which a manslayer could flee, and the other forty-two were to be added.
- Now, at first glance this is seemingly one of those nebulous details, and one for which we're prone to skip over giving no thought to its significance.
- Actually, the number forty-two carries with it a Biblical meaning, as does the number six, which is a better known symbol of the number of man.

In his book; "Biblical Mathematics" Ed Vallowe writes; "Forty-two is the number that is associated with Israel's oppression, and the Lord's advent to earth; both His first and second coming. There were forty-two generations from Abraham to the first coming of Christ, (Matthew 1:17). ...Our Lord's second coming to the earth will also be associated with the number forty-two. At the end of the forty-two months of Israel's oppression by the beast, Christ will make His second advent to the earth, (Daniel 12:7, Revelation 11:2, 12:40, 13:5). ...Our Lord's return to the earth at the end of the forty-two months of the reign of the beast must not be confused with His appearing in the air to catch away His saints."

- The number 42 is even mentioned in an obscure and quite humorous passage found in 2 Kings 2:23-25, this is where my bald friend comes in.

**2 Kings 2:23-24 NKJV** Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" (24) So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.

- Now, here's the question; "why did they say, 'go up you baldhead,' two times, and why are there two bears, that maul a total of forty-two youths?"
- Indulge me for just a moment because I want to offer what I believe is a palatable and prophetic answer, and this is where the rapture comes in.
- Notice these juvenile delinquents twice say; "go up," to Elisha who, bless his heart was obviously a man suffering from male pattern baldness.

- These forty-two youths were both mocking and blaspheming God by ridiculing Elisha telling him to go up as Elijah was raptured up before him.
- It's thought these two bears coming after Elisha pronounces a curse is a type of Christ's coming two times after man's sin pronounced a curse.
- This fits with the 2 bears and 42 youth saying "go up" picturing 2 returns of Christ; 1st - we go up, 2nd when He comes after the 2nd, 42 months.

- This brings us to the profound and prophetic picture that we have even in the six cities of refuge, which we'll see here shortly at the conclusion.
- First, understand in those days, the law and order of the day, was to take the law into your own hands and avenge the murder of a family member.
- The cities of refuge were God's protection for a man who, in the case of an accidental death, is killed before his case is brought to court for a trial.

Charles Spurgeon - "The Israelites, in common with other nations, had among them the institution of blood-revenge, by which the nearest relative was bound to revenge a man's death. To meet the evils connected with this deep-seated custom, places were appointed to which the man-slayer might flee, and be secure till the time came for a fair trial."

- It's interesting to note how that three of the six cities of refuge were on the other side of the Jordan for the two and a half tribes who were there.
- The other three cities of refuge were for the other nine and a half tribes who crossed over the Jordan, meaning they had the same number.
- Why? Couple of thoughts, first, this would mean that the one fleeing wouldn't have to travel very far to find refuge, as they were all one day away.

Adam Clarke - "The cities of refuge were distributed through the land at proper distances from each other that they might be convenient to every part of the land; and it is said they were situated on eminences, that they might be easily seen at a distance, the roads leading to them being broad, even, and always kept in good repair."

**Deuteronomy 19:3 NKJV** You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.

Charles Spurgeon - "Theses were chosen on each side of the river, that a refuge might be accessible to every man; even so is Jesus a Savior freely presented to all who desire him. The roads were repaired, and hand posts set up to direct fugitives, and thus the gospel is made plain, so that he who runs may read."

- Lest you think that we are merely recounting all this nebulous detail, let me hasten to expound on what Spurgeon just revealed in the quote I read.
- All of these mundane details will be germane to our understanding of why it is that we even have both Numbers 35 and Joshua 20 in our Bibles.
- One such detail that's mentioned in both chapters deals with a situation in which the avenger pursues one who killed his neighbor unintentionally.

- Here's why I bring this up, there's a difference between killing and murdering, and while to murder is to kill, to kill is not necessarily to murder.
- The sixth commandment in Exodus 20:13 does not say; "you shall not kill," it says; "you shall not murder." This explains why we have this detail.
- The murderer could be found guilty when, by virtue of his anger and hatred, he uses a weapon, which would show it was premeditated murder.

- In this case, the murderer was to be brought out of the city of refuge, and be put to death because it was not a case of an accidental death.
- This brings us to the case of the man who unknowingly and accidentally kills another man. He is to be delivered from death by the manslayer.
- Notice how that he is to remain in the city of refuge where he had fled, until the death of the high priest, then, at that time, he could be set free.

- This is where it starts to get really interesting because, as we'll see momentarily, this all points in typology, to our High Priest, Jesus Christ.
- It's important to know that the one who fled was only kept safe if he stayed within the limits of the city of refuge. If he leaves, it would mean death.
- He could only leave after the death of the high priest, in that he's saved by the life of the High Priest, and freed by the death of the High Priest.

- By now, I know, you know where this is all going, but, hang in there with me just a bit longer because, believe it or not, it gets even more exciting.
- By the way, there's something else here that I think is incumbent upon me to mention as it relates to being saved by staying in the city of refuge.
- It's actually found in one of my favorite chapters in one of my favorite books in the Bible, the book of Acts, chapter twenty-seven, verses 30-31.

**Acts 27:30-31** In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. **(31)** Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved."

- Paul, on this ship to Rome in the midst of a perilous storm, tells the terrified men on board that there will be no loss of life and all will be saved.
- But, that's only if they stay in the boat. If they leave the boat, they can't be saved, so too is this true if the manslayer leaves the city of refuge.
- Suffice it to say, Jesus Christ is our city of refuge, just as He is our boat. We must be in the boat, in the city, in Christ, or we cannot be saved.

- Incidentally, this has another layer to it in the sense that this can be a very encouraging word for anyone who is going through a difficult time.
- Let me explain, when we're in a storm of a trial, falsely accused, we have a place of refuge in the Savior, and the quicker we get there the better.
- Not only do we need to get there, once there, we need to stay there. Jesus Christ is our refuge in the midst of trouble, and He will keep us safe.

- There's another detail given concerning these cities of refuge, and it's one for which we would do well to take note of, in its application to us.
- God commands them to establish guilt on the testimony of two or more witnesses, because only one has the propensity for a false accusation.
- In other words, a capital murder conviction had to be established on the basis of two or more witnesses in order to find that man guilty of murder.

David Guzik - "God is concerned about the murder of reputation, as well as physical murder, and commands Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19) - the same standard as for proving murder! Remember 1 Timothy 5:19 does not say "except from two or three gossips"; it says except from two or three witnesses. If a matter is false, it does not become true because many people hear it or many people repeat it."

- One last detail then we'll see how all of this paints a beautiful scripture picture on the canvass of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- We're told how that there's no amount of money that can be paid to get someone off for murder, were they to do that, it would defile and corrupt.
- Furthermore, the murder was to be judged swiftly and severely in that he was to receive the death penalty, or justice would have not been served.

- Again, all of these details will come into clearer focus as with this one in how it shows us that no amount of money can ever buy one's salvation.
- Be that as it may, what would arguably be an obscure and uninteresting passage in the pages of Holy Writ, points to the person of Jesus Christ.
- Jesus Christ is our City of Refuge! He is our High Priest! He is who-we flee to, and are both safe, and saved, by His life, and freed by His death.

**Hebrews 6:18 NKJV** that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

### A SCRIPTURE PICTURE OF JESUS CHRIST

1. The cities of refuge were a place where one could be saved from death

Charles Spurgeon - "No sooner had the fearful deed been done than the unhappy manslayer hastened at full speed to the nearest refuge, for the blood-avenger was sure to pursue him and demand life for life. Oh! that sinners would up and away to Jesus, their sole and sure salvation."

2. They were provided divinely by God Himself as a place of refuge for all who would come.

3. It was for any and all who would come, Jew and Gentile alike.

4. Everyone had access to these cities of refuge.

5. When one fled to the city of refuge, they were safe and secure.

Charles Spurgeon - "There he was safe, no avenging hand could touch him- Fair picture of the security of those who rest in Jesus, the refuge of guilty souls"

6. All six cities of refuge were made known to all.

7. The one who fled was only kept safe in the city by the life of the High Priest.

8. Freedom only comes vis-a-vis the death of the High Priest.

Charles Spurgeon - "We are not now under the restraints and conditions which were imposed upon a dweller in a refuge city: for our Great High Priest is dead, we are liberated unconditionally, we have no avenger to fear, but may possess our inheritance in peace. This, however, is only true of believers - are we all such?"

9. The cities of refuge were for one who was pronounced innocent.

Charles Spurgeon - "God provided no sanctuary for real guilt, murder was not winked at, else had the land become both polluted and unsafe. Mercy to murderers would be cruelty to the innocent. It was accidental or unpremeditated killing which here found shelter. The spiritual fact, however, far excels the type, for in Jesus, the real sinner finds pardon and safety."

**Another commentator had some very interesting insight, and I would like to close with it;** "The cities of the Levites were scattered through the land. ... The provision of cities for refuge is full of interest. The careful study of the purpose of these cities is recommended. Note especially that they were provided to give shelter for those who had killed a person unawares. The avenger of blood (Hebrew: \_goel, which means to redeem) pursued the person and the city of refuge gave shelter. The death of the high priest resulted in liberty for all who were in the cities of refuge. It was the signal that they could return to their possessions (verse 28). Israel 's history may be easily read in this chapter in connection with the cities of refuge. The innocent blood shed is the blood of Christ. Blood guiltiness is upon the nation. They did it ignorantly, even as He prayed on Calvary 's cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." They are on account of this blood-guiltiness kept out of their inheritance, and yet they have had their city of refuge and have been preserved till the time comes when they are set free and return to the possession in the land. And that will be when the Priesthood of Christ as now exercised by Him in glory ends, when He comes forth as the King-Priest to exercise the Melchisedek priesthood.